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SUBJECT: WEEKLY MEDIA WRAP-UP: PINOCHET'S DEATH; IRAN AND THE HOLOCAUST; ISRAEL AND THE NUCLEAR CRISIS. DECEMBER 15, 2006.

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Sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) French Media coverage of ex-Chilean President Augusto Pinochet's death was unanimous in lamenting his "escape from justice" but noted that Chile had "turned a page" with the election of Michele Bachelet. A few commentators argued that overall, Latin America was on the road to democracy. Many roundly criticized Iran for its "pseudo-scientific" conference on the Holocaust. Israel's "admission" about nuclear weapons, in the context of Iran's threats, was also widely reported. End Summary.

AUGUSTO PINOCHET'S ESCAPE FROM JUSTICE

¶2. (SBU) Pierre Taribo, in regional L'Est Republicain, declared that "a remorseless dictator has just died without paying his dues." Left-wing Liberation regretted that "the man who, for more than four decades, had been the incarnation of a bastard died without expressing remorse or having been tried." In the regional La Republique des Pyrenees, Jean-Marcel Bouguereau argued that Pinochet "had come close to being judged in London; and, even if he died without expressing remorse, no dictator today could live in impunity: in the end, like Milosevic, Pinochet contributed to the implementation of international justice."

¶3. (SBU) Jean-Christophe Ploquin, in Catholic La Croix, editorialized on "justice in the making" and claimed that "Pinochet might be dead, but the fight against impunity continues." Ploquin concluded that Pinochet, "despite himself," had contributed to "eradicating the notion that heads of state might be untouchable," and to the creation of the International Court of Justice. "Democracies," argued Ploquin, "have enriched their institutions with legislation allowing them to try former tyrants" based on the principle of "universal competency" derived from the Pinochet case.

¶4. (SBU) Left-of-center Le Monde concluded that "many Latin American countries had traveled the road to democracy," and that their governments were the results of democratic elections. In regional Ouest France, Alain Musset mused that "even the old 'guerrilleros,' like Nicaragua's Ortega, had evolved." Pierre Haski, in left-wing Liberation, proclaimed that Chile's new President, "Michele Bachelet, a woman, a socialist and the daughter of one of Pinochet's victims, stood as an optimistic symbol and the ultimate revenge on the dictator."

¶5. (SBU) Left-wing Liberation, which headlined "Iran Exploits Holocaust Issue," asked why "a nation with such a brilliant past as Iran is so willing to provoke western opinion?" Pierre Haski, in left-wing Liberation, argued that Ahmadinejad was "taking advantage" of a Middle East "exacerbated by the war in Iraq" and of "the Palestinians' hellish situation in Gaza" to present himself as a "leader" for the Arab-Muslim world. Haski noted that Iran's President was "surfing on the crest of anti-western feelings prevalent in the Arab world."

¶6. (SBU) In Catholic La Croix, editorialist Dominique Quinio commented that "Ahmadinejad had no qualms about tarnishing his image in Western opinion." Quinio lamented that "the complications the Americans were facing in Iraq" would not "bring Ahmadinejad to reason." Quinio concluded that because Iran was a "necessary interlocutor" in settling the region's conflicts, "Ahmadinejad could afford to be arrogant." In right-of-center Le Parisien, Bruno Fanucchi argued that Ahmadinejad was "deliberately seeking the support of all Muslim countries who are the declared enemies of Israel."

¶7. (SBU) FM Douste-Blazy told right-of-center Le Figaro that "if the aim of the conference were to disseminate revisionism, France would be obligated to condemn the conference with determination." French professor Robert Faurisson, who has been barred from teaching at the University of Lyon for promoting revisionism, participated in the conference. Left-wing Liberation reported FM Douste-Blazy's remarks at the National Assembly that he would be studying "every possible legal avenue" to prosecute Faurisson for his remarks. Left-wing Liberation commented that, "according to French law, the fact that [Faurisson's] revisionist remarks were made public in France, although pronounced abroad, was enough to elicit a legal procedure."

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¶8. (SBU) Right-of-center Le Parisien commented on Israel's "admission" that it possessed the bomb, "when no one was asking." Left-of-center Le Monde criticized PM Olmert for a "Freudian slip" that came at the "worst possible moment." In right-of-center Le Parisien, Bruno Fanucchi contended that the "slip" was a "godsend" for the Iranian regime. Left-of-center Le Monde argued that it "added fuel to the fire" and fed resentment over "double standards." Right-of-center Le Figaro hinted that Olmert's "slip" might have been a "barely veiled warning to Tehran."

¶9. (SBU) In right-of-center Le Figaro, Patrick Saint-Paul contended that "in the wake of Iran's revisionist conference, Olmert could not help showing his claws." Right-of-center France Soir doubted that "Olmert's revelations might really have the effect of a bomb" when Israel's "nuclear question" was a "long-running story in which France had played a prominent role." Charles Enderlin, the correspondent for FR2 television in Jerusalem, argued in an interview in right-of-center France Soir that "despite the controversy that had surrounded the arrest of Mordechai Vanunu, no formal proof existed to support the notion that Israel was in possession of nuclear capabilities." Enderlin argued that "Israel's policy of ambivalence had prevailed, in apparent agreement with France and the U.S."

STAPLETON